

CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT MAY 2008

Communication

Level 3

General Comments

The May 2008 paper proved to be an appropriate, and suitably discriminating, instrument for the testing of Level 3 skills.

The topic of "Gadgets" was accessible and engaging for candidates at this level, although this sometimes led to responses based on information from the candidates' own knowledge and experience rather than the source documents provided. The questions on this paper were relatively straightforward and in a format with which suitably prepared candidates should have been familiar.

Documents 1 and 2 afforded ample information to answer Question 1, and many candidates achieved full marks. The best answers were concise and focused simply on listing four ways young people feel about gadgets with little or no unnecessary explanation. One source of confusion was the final quotation in Document 1, where some candidates misinterpreted the meaning of "if they're too big, we don't care", citing this as evidence of indifference to size instead of the opposite ("More than styling, size has had a big impact").

Most candidates were able to identify three concerns about the use of new technology raised in Document 3, though its precise impact on learning was sometimes confused or undeveloped, and a few responses failed to appreciate that the writer was not wholeheartedly in favour of technology replacing more traditional educational methods and materials. Many candidates, in attempting the second part of the question, did not differentiate between the ideas expressed in Documents 1 and 2, to the extent that sometimes it was difficult to justify the awarding of the mark for using all three documents. There were, however, some good answers which discussed in some detail ideas from both Document 1 and Document 2 and related these closely to the concerns they had selected from Document 3.

On this occasion, many candidates struggled to provide an interpretation of the meaning of the images in Documents 1 and 2 which was more than a simple description. The inclusion of a caption for the second image proved to be all too inviting for some who merely quoted this as the meaning of the image. This was not rewarded, though marks could be given if the candidate used this to inform their response to the second part of the question, as part of the argument contained in Document 2. Few candidates were adept at assessing clearly how far the images supported the text in their respective documents, though the majority could show that one or both contributed something to the overall meaning.

The best answers to Question 4 recognised that the two documents under discussion not only differed from each other in both the tenor and the

detail of their views about new technology, but also contained within themselves more than a single point of view. Many more did not consider **the extent** to which the benefits of technology they had identified were supported by other information or arguments, and several did not consider the issue at all.

As in the previous series, candidates generally seemed familiar with the appropriate tone and structure for an article, though again many lost a mark through failing to provide a suitable heading. There were, as noted above, some instances of candidates introducing information not contained in the source material, particularly with respect to possible long-term effects (usually negative) of increased use of technology, and some use of invented interviews which, though imaginative, did not fulfil the requirement of the question. However, most responses showed at least adequate understanding of the ideas in the source documents and the ability to organise these into an engaging article. Many candidates, though, do not demonstrate a high standard of written English and lose marks accordingly. Common errors included misspellings - sometimes of words included in the source documents, such as technology, gadgets, framework - omission or incorrect insertion of apostrophes (for example, before the final 's' in a simple plural), incorrect subject-verb agreement, omission or incorrect use of commas and omission or inaccurate use of capital letters (occasionally, responses are presented entirely in block capitals).

Recommendation to Centres

Centres are reminded that, at Level 3, mastery of the basic rules of spelling, punctuation and grammar is essential, and it should not be assumed that all candidates studying at Level 3 in either academic or vocational subjects will necessarily have this ability. Ensure ALL candidates who are entered for the Communication Key Skill at this level have the appropriate skills and knowledge to allow them to be successful. Candidates should be given opportunities to practice techniques which commonly feature in Level 3 tests: identifying and briefly summarising the main points of a text; analysing images used to illustrate text and evaluating their relevance and suitability; synthesising viewpoints from different documents. Centres where coaching is provided in examination technique and the conventions of writing different types of document give their candidates a considerable advantage when approaching the test. For example, guided exercises in writing articles for different purposes and audiences would be most useful. Candidates should be advised that imitating the multi-column structure typical of articles appearing in printed publications is not required, and should not be employed if this makes the handwriting more difficult to read.

Candidates should be reminded that if, as part of their extended answer to Question 5 in Part B of the test, they make direct reference to the source documents, these should be referred to by their title and original source, not simply as Document 1, 2, or 3, which would mean little to the reader in the specified context.

Chief Examiner July 2008

